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LETTER DATED 27 NOVEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to forward a letter from Mr. Ljubomir Frckovski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, regarding the request for the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia after 30 November 1996 (see annex).

I also have the honour to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Denko MALESKI
Ambassador

96-34012 (E) 271196

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Annex

Letter dated 18 November 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia addressed to the Secretary-General

I believe that there is a need to address you once again regarding the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia after 30 November 1996.

I would first like to express my deep appreciation for the contents of your report to the Security Council of 30 September 1996 (S/1996/819) recommending extension of the mission's presence and elaborating the arguments in favour of so doing. We highly appreciate your recommendation, made on the basis of the professional observations of the Special Representative and the Force Commander, that any reduction in troops would have a negative impact on the implementation of the mandate and weaken the capacity of the international community to assess and respond to potential threats to the Republic of Macedonia. Aware of the financial difficulties of the United Nations and of the need to re-examine all United Nations peace operations, including UNPREDEP, we support all activities of the Security Council for permanent evaluation of the status of all missions.

However, I am convinced that you share my opinion that, unfortunately, since my last letter to you of 6 August 1996, the situation in the region has not changed to an extent that would allow changes in the future of UNPREDEP, either its reduction or termination.

As I already mentioned in my previous letter, the key reasons for further presence of UNPREDEP in the country are understandable, firstly, because of the sensitive and complex situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period of implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord and the future developments reflecting the outcomes of the London Conference; secondly, because of the country's inability to upgrade its own defence capabilities to a satisfactory level in a short period of time; and, thirdly, because of the forthcoming demarcation of the State border with our northern neighbour, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Here I would like to draw your attention in particular to the issue of the complexity of the situation in Kosovo, which we consider to be a potential source of inter-ethnic tensions in the region. Regardless of various predictions and strivings as regards the timing of the resolution of this issue, it is undoubtedly clear that, in the case of an undesired negative development in the situation, the UNPREDEP peacekeeping force will play an essential role in preventing the spill-over and the spread of tension on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

During his recent visit to the Republic of Macedonia, coordinated with the United Nations Secretariat, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, expressed his high consideration for the organization and functioning of the UNPREDEP structures.

The forthcoming months will be crucial for consolidation of the peace process to be accomplished in the region. Any decision on reduction and withdrawal of the military staff and equipment in winter conditions would complicate its implementation and would result in minimal savings from a financial point of view. Furthermore, we consider that such a decision would impair the stability of the country and the region, giving a "wrong signal".

I am convinced that your recommendations to the Security Council regarding the future of UNPREDEP, including the evaluation of the general situation in the region and the potential threats that continue to endanger the peace and stability of the Republic of Macedonia, would be a sound basis for an appropriate reaction by the members of the Security Council as they consider the issues of extending the mandate and of the strength and composition of the UNPREDEP mission.

We would highly appreciate it if the present letter could be made available to the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ljubomir D. FRCKOVSKI